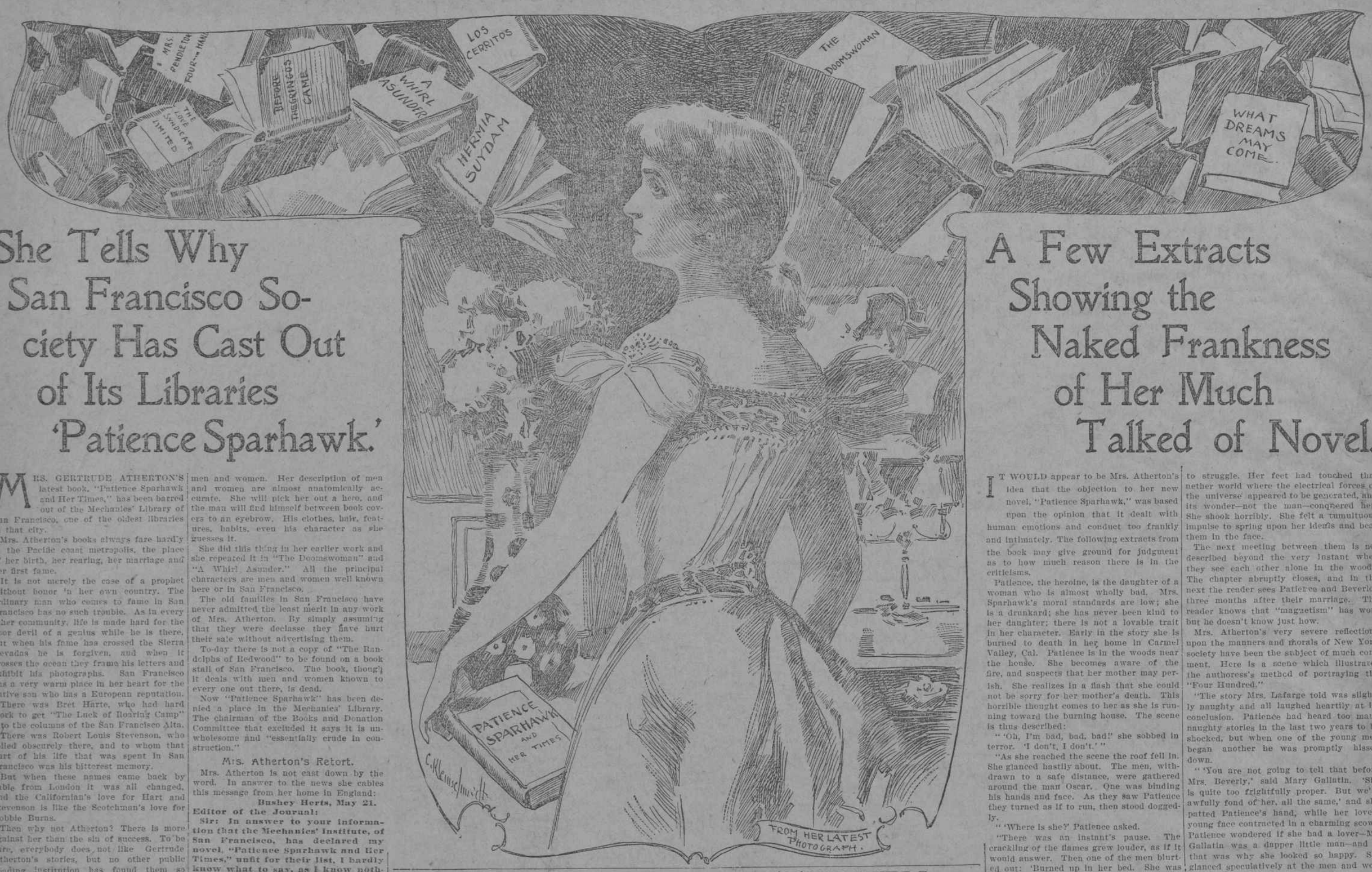
GERTRUDE ATHERTON CRUCIFIED FOR CANDOR.



She Tells Why San Francisco Society Has Cast Out of Its Libraries 'Patience Sparhawk.'

MRS. GERTRUDE ATHERTON'S latest book, "Patience Sparhawk and Her Times," has been barred out of the Mechanics' Library of San Francisco, one of the oldest libraries in that city.

Mrs. Atherton's books always fare hardly in the Pacific coast metropolis, the place of her birth, her rearing, her marriage and her first fame.

It is not merely the case of a prophet without honor in her own country. The ordinary man who comes to fame in San Francisco has no such trouble. As in every other community, life is made hard for the poor devil of a genius while he is there, but when his fame has crossed the Sierra Nevadas he is forgiven, and when it crosses the ocean they frame his letters and exhibit his photographs. San Francisco has a very warm place in her heart for the native son who has a European reputation.

There was Bret Harte, who had hard work to get "The Luck of Roaring Camp" into the columns of the San Francisco Alta.

There was Robert Louis Stevenson, who toiled obscurely there, and to whom that part of his life that was spent in San Francisco was his bitterest memory.

But when these names came back by cable from London it was all changed, and the Californian's love for Hart and Stevenson is like the Scotchman's love for Bobbie Burns.

Then why not Atherton? There is more against her than the sin of success. To be sure, everybody does not like Gertrude Atherton's stories, but no other public reading institution has found them so wrong as to deny them a place on the book shelves.

The reasons for Gertrude Atherton's unpopularity in her own town go back almost to her girlhood. San Francisco society is against her. She was not of it originally, but she came into it, and the first use to which she put her pen was to assail it. There may have been something of reprisal about this effort, a getting back for the slights a woman—even an analytical novelist—will treasure up, but San Francisco society refused to consider any extenuating circumstances for the crime of "The Randolphs of Redwood," and has frowned on Mrs. Atherton all along the road of her literary journey. To understand this it is necessary to tell a story that Mrs. Atherton has not written—the story of her own life.

To begin with, quite a number of years ago the future novelist was a pretty girl, daughter of a bookkeeper or something of that sort, with a mother who was much the sort of a woman that Gertrude Atherton is now—brilliant, handsome and hard.

The daughter was Gertrude Howe, or Uhlhorn, and she was popular as she was pretty. Her wit had not fermented and soured then, and she was more likely to say pleasant than unpleasant things. She could not have been more than eighteen when she married George Atherton. He was one of The Athertons, and the marriage brought her right into the oldest society of the coast—the set of the McAllisters, Ralstons, Levises, Haggins, Valencias, Rathbones, Lounsburys and the rest of those whose circle was impenetrable to any latter-day railroad millionaire.

Heaven only knows why she married Atherton—probably because he wanted her to. They were scarcely a congenial couple in his country palace at Menlo Park. Mrs. Atherton sometimes refers to that particular period of her life as her term in prison.

At Menlo, then the aristocratic suburb of San Francisco, she met and knew all these dignitaries of society. When her husband died and she began to write she took for the scene of her first story Menlo Park, and for her characters the people she knew, and only under the thinnest of disguises did she hide their proper names. "The Randolphs of Redwood" created a sensation, but it also created a great chill in the rarified air of the highest society of San Francisco.

From that time until now the aristocrats have been fighting her. As book after book came out with her name, they tore it to pieces. They have clever people in San Francisco, and the critiques on her work were as fierce as words could make them.

"What Dreams May Come" and "Herman Suydam" were among the early products of her pen. "Immoral," "crude," "repellant," "inartistic," were some of the adjectives San Francisco applied to these and the books that came later shared the same fate in the western rim of America, though they made her fame and fortune in the English-speaking capitals of the world.

In "The Randolphs of Redwood," Mrs. Atherton laid bare the unpleasant features of the lives of the people she knew. This putting her friends, acquaintances, admirers and enemies into books is a favorite literary trick of hers. Hardly a novel of her whole output but those who know Mrs. Atherton could recognize in it real men and women. Her description of men and women are almost anatomically accurate. She will pick her out a hero, and the man will find himself between book covers to an eyebrow. His clothes, hair, features, habits, even his character as she guesses it.

She did this thing in her earlier work and she repeated it in "The Doomswoman" and "A Whirl Asunder." All the principal characters are men and women well known here or in San Francisco.

The old families in San Francisco have never admitted the least merit in any work of Mrs. Atherton. By simply assuming that they were declasse they have hurt their sale without advertising them.

To-day there is not a copy of "The Randolphs of Redwood" to be found on a book stall of San Francisco. The book, though it deals with men and women known to every one out there, is dead.

Now "Patience Sparhawk" has been denied a place in the Mechanics' Library. The chairman of the Books and Donation Committee that excluded it says it is unwholesome and "essentially crude in construction."

Mrs. Atherton's Retort.

Mrs. Atherton is not cast down by the word. In answer to the news she cables this message from her home in England:

Bushey Herts, May 21.

Editor of the Journal:

Sir: In answer to your information that the Mechanics' Institute, of San Francisco, has declared my novel, "Patience Sparhawk and Her Times," unfit for their list, I hardly know what to say, as I know nothing about either the institution or its list. The only San Francisco library I have any knowledge of is the Mercantile, and I suppose they have this book, as they had the others. Knowing nothing of the character of the Mechanics' Institute, it is impossible for me to guess in what manner the find my book wanting.

It may be too long, and doubtless their subscribers are pressed for time. It may be too analytical, too exciting, too carefully written, too severe on the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. The number of charmeters may be confusing.

Possibly their subscribers are largely made up of that class whose political dishonesty nearly compasses the death of the heroine. This, on the whole, I think, must be the reason of their course.

They might think it improper, for it is more than possible that they have neither Shakespeare nor Balzac on their shelves, who also dissect now and again without gloves and prepare the average reader for the novelist of realities; but this I hardly think is the real reason. The political theory is far more likely. GERTRUDE ATHERTON.

This may not be the keenest irony ever written, but it indicates that the feud between the novelist and San Francisco is not all one-sided.

THE TCHUKTCHIS.

A People with No Government, Who Value a Wife at a Handful of Tobacco.

The English explorer, Harry de Windt, recently returned to London from the Siberian shores of Behring Strait. In a short time he will leave England for a lecturing tour in the United States. He was brutally treated by the Tchuktchis at Oumwaldjik. In consequence of this the United States Government will, it is said, send a vessel to Oumwaldjik to punish the chief. The Tchuktchis are nominally Russian subjects; but the only vessels ever in the neighborhood are American whalers and the United States revenue cutter. Mr. De Windt had an enforced sojourn of two months among the natives.

He says they are physically a far finer race than the Alaskan Eskimo races, and their women are better looking, but the Tchuktchis are wholly devoid of morality, and will barter a wife for a handful of tobacco. Infidelity is no crime among them. They number altogether about 5,000, and along Bering Strait are seven settlements of perhaps 300 each. The others are scattered along the seaboard of the Arctic Ocean, stretching away to the settlement of Nijni Kolymsk.

The most weird Tchuktchi ceremony is the "Kamitsk." This is simply the putting to death, with their free consent, of aged or useless members of the community. When a Tchuktchi's powers have decreased to an appreciable extent, a family council is held and a day fixed for the victim's departure for another world. Perhaps the most curious feature is the indifference shown by the doomed one, who takes a lively interest in the proceedings, and often assists in the preparations for his own death. The execution is preceded by a feast, where seal and walrus meat are greedily devoured and villainous whiskey is consumed

A TURK FROM TURKEY.

The Handsome New Secretary Who Looks Like a Greek God and Is Making a Great Social Hit in Washington.

Seifeddin Bey, the new secretary of the Turkish Legation, is a pet in Washington society, where he is known as the "Young Greek God." The new favorite is a full-blooded Turk.

One might suppose that a youth who was in the habit of seeing wives by the wholesale could hardly be looked upon by American girls as a good match. But the fact that he may have have a dozen wives in a harem at home does not at all trouble the Washington girl.

He certainly is handsome. His features are very clear-cut and regular and his dark eyes superb, none the less so for the fact that they look rather contemptously at the fashionable maidens who show none of the coyness in vogue in the harem. It may be that the girls are so used to admiration that this very superciliousness adds to his charms. His skin is of the clearest olive and his mouth curved like a veritable Cupid's bow.

Seifeddin Bey wears ordinary civilian dress, with the notable exception of his hat, which is a fez. He is of medium height and carries himself very well. He is a nobleman.

Rather an amusing story is told about the young Turk. When he first arrived in Washington he stood in great need of an English teacerh.

A friend put him into communication with a young woman who was seeking pupils. She was pretty and belonged to an excellent family. Seifeddin Bey was quite delighted to find so pleasing a teacher. Terms were agreed upon and all went went well until he suggested that the young lady should come to his apartments to give the lessons. She told him this would not be possible. When pressed for a reason she admitted that it would not be considered proper.

"Not proper!" cried the new secretary in amazement. "I thought American girls did anything! You go to the theatre with a young man, you go for walks with him, you take drives with him; what is the difference?"

He dances, they say, like a moonbeam on the water, and though he speaks very little English, he can yet make himself agreeable. It is recognized, however, by the mammas, at all events, that this charming young Turk is by no means an eligible partner from the American point of view. Though a bachelor now, the time may arrive when, returned to his native country, he will commence in real earnest the business of acquiring a harem. It would not be wholly satisfactory to a Washington young woman to find herself even the favorite wife Later on, tooserimm of a polygamous young Bey. Later on, too—the Bey having become middle-aged and a Bashaw—might take a notion to get rid of her by the bow-string and Bosphorous route.

"Bey," by the way, is a title of nobility, and Seifeddin is said to have some fortune of his own. Whether or not the latter point is correct, it is certain that he lives very modestly here. His living quarters are a bedroom at the Turkish Legation, now situated at No. 1605 New Hampshire avenue. Of course, he is invited out a great deal, and of dinner parties he is particularly fond. The girls like to polish their boarding-school French on him—for he speaks that language fluently.

Meanwhile, he is leaning to talk English, and the chaperones keep a sharp eye on him. Washington girls have a weakness for the diplomats. A certain glamour envelopes these foreigners, with their professional reputation for mystery and intrigue.

Nearly all the Turkish diplomats sent to Washington have been Greeks. Mavroyeni Bey was a Greek. Now the Legation is Moslem clear through.

Washington's Latest Social Pet, Mr. Seifeddin Bey, New Secretary of the Turkish Legation.

A Few Extracts Showing the Naked Frankness of Her Much Talked of Novel.

IT WOULD appear to be Mrs. Atherton's idea that the objection to her new novel, "Patience Sparhawk," was based upon the opinion that it dealt with human emotions and conduct too frankly and intimately. The following extracts from the book may give ground for judgment as to how much reason there is in the criticisms.

Patience, the heroine, is the daughter of a woman who is almost wholly bad. Mrs. Sparhawk's moral standards are low; she is a drunkard; she has never been kind to her daughter; there is not a lovable trait in her character. Early in the story she is burned to death in her home in Carmel Valley, Cal. Patience is in the woods near the house. She becomes aware of the fire, and suspects that her mother may perish. She realizes in a flash that she could not be sorry for her mother's death. This horrible thought comes to her as she is running toward the burning house. The scene is thus described:

"'Oh, I'm bad, bad, bad!' she sobbed in terror. 'I don't, I don't.'"

"As she reached the scene the roof fell in. She glanced hastily about. The men, withdrawn to a safe distance, were gathered around the man Oscar. One was binding his hands and face. As they saw Patience they turned as if to run, then stood doggedly.

"'Where is she?' Patience asked.

"There was an instant's pause. The crackling of the flames grew louder, as if it would answer. Then one of the men blurted out: 'Burned up in her bed. She was drunk. We was all in the field when the fire broke out. When we got here Oscar tried to get at her room with a ladder, but it was no go. Poor old Madge!'

"Patience without another word turned and ran back to the woods. She ran until she was exhausted, more horrified at herself than she had been at any one of her unhappy experiences. After a time she fell among the dry pine needles, her good, as she expressed it, still trying to fight down her bad. She felt that the demon possessing her would have sung aloud had she not held it by the throat. She conjured up all the horrible details of her mother's death and ordered her soul to pity; but her brain remarked coldly that her mother had probably felt nothing. She imagined the charred corpse, but it only offended her artistic sense.

"Finally she fell asleep. The day was far gone when she awoke. She lay for a time staring at the dim arches above her, listening to the night voices she had once loved so passionately. At last she drew a deep sigh.

"'I might just as well face the truth,' she said aloud. 'I'm glad, and that's the end of it. It's wicked, and I'm sorry; but what is is, and I can't help it. We're not all mad alike.'"

Patience is fifteen years old at this time. Shortly afterward she comes to New York State and is for about two years under the care of a kind old lady, who is a religious enthusiast and an ardent advocate of total abstinence. The old lady has rich and aristocratic relatives named Peele, and it is Beverley Peele whom Patience marries after the death of her protectress.

Beverley is a man with a bad temper and a weak mind, but he possesses great personal attractions. He has what is called "magnetism," and Patience falls a victim to it. Beverley's wooing is short, sharp and decisive. The second time he sees Patience he declares his love without the slightest warning. He seizes her hands and wont release them.

"'I wish you would leave the house,' she said, stamping her foot. 'If you don't let me go I'll call Ellen.'

"'Oh, don't make a goose of yourself. And I'm not afraid of a servant. I'm not going to murder you—nor anything else. Only—do you drive all men wild like this?'

"'I don't know anything about men,' almost sobbed Patience, 'and I don't want to. Will you go?'

"'No, I wont.' He released her hands suddenly, and, as she made a spring for the door, flung his arms about her. She ducked her head and fought him, but he kissed her cheeks and brow and hair. His lips burned her delicate skin, his powerful embrace seemed absorbing her. She was filled with fury and loathing, but the blood pounded in her ears, and the very air seemed humming. The man's magnetism was purely animal, but it was a tremendous force.

"'You are a brute, a beast!' she sobbed. 'Let me go! Let me go!'

"'I wont,' he murmured. He too had lost his head. 'I'll not leave you.' He strove to reach her mouth. She managed to disengage her right arm, and clinching her hand hit him a smart blow in the face. He laughed and caught her hand, holding it out at arm's length.

"'Ellen!' she cried. As she lifted her head to call he was quick to see his advantage. His mouth closed suddenly on hers.

"The room swam around her. She ceased to struggle. Her feet had touched that nether world where the electrical forces of the universe appeared to be generated, and its wonder—not the man—conquered her. She shook horribly. She felt a tumultuous impulse to spring upon her ideals and beat them in the face.

The next meeting between them is not described beyond the very instant when they see each other alone in the woods. The chapter abruptly closes, and in the next the reader sees Patience and Beverley three months after their marriage. The reader knows that "magnetism" has won, but he doesn't know just how.

Mrs. Atherton's very severe reflections upon the manners and morals of New York society have been the subject of much comment. Here is a scene which illustrates the authoress's method of portraying the "Four Hundred."

"The story Mrs. Lafarge told was slightly naughty and all laughed heartily at its conclusion. Patience had heard too many naughty stories in the last two years to be shocked, but when one of the young men began another he was promptly hissed down.

"'You are not going to tell that before Mrs. Beverly,' said Mary Gallatin. 'She is quite too frightfully proper. But we're awfully fond of her, all the same,' and she patted Patience's hand, while her lovely young face contracted in a charming scowl. Patience wondered if she had a lover—Mr. Gallatin was a dapper little man—and if that was why she looked so happy. She glanced speculatively at the men and wondered if she could fall in love with one of them. But they were very ordinary New York youths of fashion, high of shoulder, slow of speech, large of epiglottis, vacuous of expression. She shook her head unconsciously.

"'Why, what on earth are you thinking about?' cried Mrs. Gallatin, with her silvery laugh. 'That wasn't a shake of disapproval was it?'

"'Oh, no, no!' said Patience, hastily. 'Something occurred to me, and I forgot I was not alone. You see, I'm so much alone that I've even gotten into the habit of thinking out loud.'"

The plot of the story involves the murder of Beverley Peele, and the arrest of his wife—who, after having separated from him, has returned to nurse him in illness. The charge is brought, and eventually carried to a conviction in the courts through a combined political and journalistic plot, assisted by the most frightful perjury on the part of the real murderess—a jealous woman.

Patience is convicted and sentenced to be electrocuted. The last chapter in the book describes the events of the forenoon of the day set for the execution.

Garan Bourke, the lawyer who has defended Patience, is making a last attempt to save her. He has, with the aid of a priest, secured a confession from the murderess, and is moving heaven and earth to get it before the Governor in time.

Meanwhile Patience is led into the death chamber at Sing Sing, and placed in the chair. Then comes the climax of the story, as follows:

"Her head was drawn gently back, her eyes covered. Something leapt and fought within her. Horror tore at her vitals, snarling like a wolfhound. But once more her will rose supreme. Then, as she realized that her last moment had come, she became possessed by one mighty desire—to compel her imagination to give her the phantasm, the voice, the touch of her lover.

"The wrench with which she accomplished her object was so violent, the mental concentration so overmastering, that all other consciousness was extinguished.

"Suddenly her ears were pierced by a din which made her muscles leap against the straps. Was she in hell, and was this her greeting? She felt a second's thankfulness that death had been painless.

"Then, out of the babel of sound, she distinguished words which made her sit erect and open her eyes, her pulses bound, her blood leap, hot and stinging, her whole being rebound with the gladness of life.

"The cap had been removed, the men were unbuckling the straps. The head keeper had flung his cap on the floor and run his hands through his hair until it stood up straight. Round her chair the newspaper men were pressing, shouting and cheering, trying to get at her hand to shake it.

"Then she forgot them. A sudden parting in the ranks showed her the open door. At the same moment the men stopped shouting. Bourke had entered. He had followed the guard mechanically, neither hoping nor fearing until the far-reaching cheers sent the blood springing through his veins once more.

"He was neither clean nor picturesque, but Patience saw only his eyes. He walked forward rapidly, and, lifting her in his arms, carried her from the room."